

Sheepmen's Lower Production Sure To Improve Their Profit Picture

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MERTZON — Good rains and strong markets are bringing a heady feeling of prosperity to the Shortgrass Country. The winter doldrums have been replaced by high hopes that this will be the years that ended the post-Civil War depression. Hombres bearing long records of pessimism are beginning to prophesy that the boom will last until Independence Day. In the optimists' camp the thinking is that the area's livestock industry is certain to survive until mid-August.

Small lamb crops and light wool harvest have contributed largely to the overall sense of well being. Citizens have been quick to realize the decrease in production will reduce their overhead. As tallies were being taken on flocks, growers became aware that producing fewer lambs and less wool was certain to lower their expenses.

The first symptom was the amount of soremouth vaccine that was returned unused after the marking season. Practically every rancher overbought on this item. Outfits that normally spent up to \$12 or \$13 immunizing their lambs were able to do the job for half the money this spring. This wasn't hard to figure. The 40 percent drop in lamb numbers simply meant a 40 percent decrease in the number of doses of medicine needed.

At $\frac{3}{4}$ cent per dose, that wasn't a tremendous saving; yet, in these times, a complimentary ticket on a miniature railroad would look like big money to a sheepman. If old Ben Franklin had just said, "try to save a penny a day" instead of "SAVE a penny a day," he would have hit our game right on the target.

Refund of shearing supplies brought on the same bonanza of credit memos. Wool sacks were returned by the bundle. Six-pound fleeces are mighty economical to pack. Freightage the wool to the warehouse is cheaper this season; in many instances a 400-head clip didn't take up half a pickup bed. I wish now that I'd borrowed one of those foreign compacts to haul mine.

Other windfalls developed as the season of low production progressed. Captains of the range soon learned that the abundance of dry ewes meant far less labor. A half-staffed marking crew could tear out a pasture in record time. And lack of problems created by lambs in the shearing pens gave one fellow ample time to put in a garden while the work was going on everybody has been finding out that the transition was to our benefit.

It'll be a long time before the spring of 1969 is forgotten. Trouble hunters are crying that we aren't going to make it on our small harvest. But those of us who understand this country best know that any time expenses go down, we are bound to be on the road to the pay window.